

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. – 10. (Canceled)

11. (Previously presented) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacterial cells and an exopolysaccharide in slime form that is obtained by a process comprising:

culturing a *Sphingomonas* bacteria selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof for a time and temperature effective for providing a broth from which a sphingan exopolysaccharide can be recovered with an alcohol precipitation method at a temperature of about 25°C to about 50°C,

wherein the method yields at least about 10 grams of sphingan exopolysaccharide per liter of broth.

12. (Previously presented) A fermentation broth according to claim 11 wherein fermentation is conducted from about 48 to about 96 hours at a temperature of about 25°C to about 35°C.

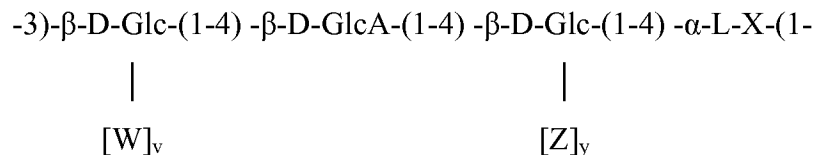
13. (Previously presented) A fermentation broth according to claim 11 wherein in the alcohol precipitation method from about 1 to about 1.5 volumes of alcohol are added to the fermentation broth.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacterial cells and an exopolysaccharide in a slime form, wherein the exopolysaccharide can be recovered from said fermentation broth by alcohol precipitation at a temperature of about 25°C to about 50°C to yield at least about 10 grams of exopolysaccharide per liter of broth, and wherein the *Sphingomonas* is selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

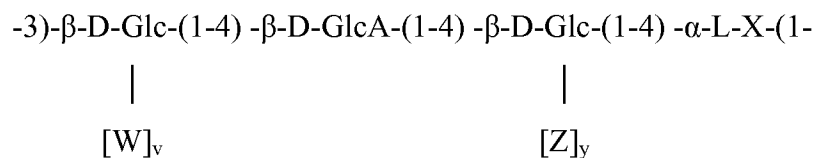
16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously presented) A fermentation broth according to claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is a sphingan exopolysaccharide having the general formula



wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is α -L-Rha-(1-4)- α -L-Rha, α -L-Man or α -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is β -D-Glc-(1-6)- α -D-Glc, β -D-Glc-(1-6)- β -D-Glc or α -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

18. (Currently Amended) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacterial cells and an exopolysaccharide in a slime form having the general formula



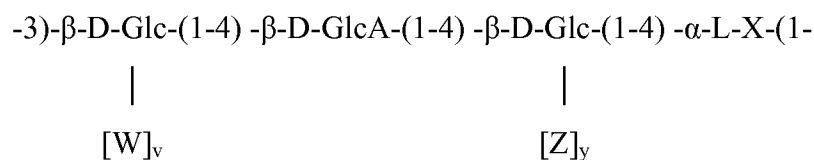
wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is α -L-Rha-(1-4)- α -L-Rha, α -L-Man or α -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is β -D-Glc-(1-6)- α -D-Glc, β -D-Glc-(1-6)- β -D-Glc or α -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1, ~~and~~ wherein the fermentation broth has at least about 1% w/v exopolysaccharide and a viscosity of not more than about 25,000 cp, and wherein the *Sphingomonas* is selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacteria and an exopolysaccharide in a slime form produced by the *Sphingomonas* bacteria, wherein the *Sphingomonas* bacteria are grown in a submerged, aerated liquid culture, ~~and~~ wherein a concentration of dissolved oxygen exceeds about 5% of saturation of water after 24 hours of culturing, and wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by *Sphingomonas* selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) A fermentation broth according to claim ~~21~~20 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is a sphingan exopolysaccharide having the general formula



wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is Rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is α -L-Rha-(1-4)- α -L-Rha, α -L-Man or α -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is β -D-Glc-(1-6)- α -D-Glc, β -D-Glc-(1-6)- β -D-Glc or α -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

23. (Previously presented) The fermentation broth of claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide is selected from the group consisting of gellan, welan, rhamsan, S-88, S-7, S-198, NW-11 and S-657.

24. (Previously presented) The fermentation broth of claim 23 wherein the exopolysaccharide is selected from the group consisting of gellan, welan, S-7 and S-88.